
WESTERN EDUCATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY (WELS)

FRESHMEN IN TRANSITION: STUDENTS WHO ENTERED AS
FRESHMEN IN THE FALL QUARTER, 2005, SURVEYED AT
THE END OF FALL QUARTER, 2005

REPORT 2006-05

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Table of Contents

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Freshmen in Transition—Fall Quarter, 2005, In-coming Freshmen Surveyed at the End of Fall Quarter, 2005

Introduction	2-3
Western's Culture	5
Transition	6
Personal Difficulties	7
Work	8
Academic Difficulties	9
Resources	10-11
Western Programs	12-14

WESTERN EDUCATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY (WELS) FRESHMEN IN TRANSITION: STUDENTS WHO ENTERED AS FRESHMEN IN THE FALL QUARTER, 2005, SURVEYED AT THE END OF FALL QUARTER, 2005

WELS BACKGROUND

The Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) is a series of internal longitudinal surveys of all in-coming first-year and transfer students administered every two-three years. This study involves an initial assessment of students prior to entering Western and then a series of follow-ups at different points in their academic careers. The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) To assess student needs based on their self-reported characteristics, perceptions and concerns; (2) To provide data that can be used to better assess academic and co-curricular programs by providing baseline entry data that can be used as statistical controls in analyses to offset the inability to conduct randomized studies; and (3) To maintain an ongoing record of student knowledge acquisition, ability levels, and other general education outcomes to address concerns of accountability and accreditation.

The WELS is conducted by the Office of Survey Research (OSR) and uses a mixture of on-line and telephone survey methodologies. Since the data collected in these studies includes identifying information, these data can and are linked with data in student records, thus expanding their usefulness beyond what could be obtained using large national studies such as the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE). Although WELS data cannot, like other national studies, be used for comparisons to other institutions, the surveys have more flexibility in content to allow them to be tailored to Western's needs.

WELS 2003 COHORT

The first WELS was administered in the summer, 2003, and included only in-coming freshmen (no transfers)¹. The baseline survey was developed as a result of meetings with various stakeholders across campus (the Provost's Office, student services, deans, the faculty senate, ATUS, etc.) as well as focus groups with students and a search for potentially useful items used on various national surveys. This baseline included 1580 out of 2225 incoming first year non-transfer students (a response rate of 71%). This cohort was then followed up at the end of their first quarter (fall, 2003: 42% response rate), the end of their first year (spring, 2004: 55% response rate), and the end of their second year (spring 2005: 70% response rate), and at the end of their third year (see details below). They will also be assessed at the end of their fourth year. Each follow-up survey is designed to address pressing concerns about student needs, programming, and accountability and accreditation standards pertinent to the students' year in college. (For example, the first quarter follow-up of the 2003 cohort was focused on how well students make the adjustment to college; and the first and second year follow-ups focused on GURs, since students were in the midst of completing most of their GURs and the requirement itself was under review at the time).

WELS 2005 COHORTS

A second series of WELS baseline surveys was initiated in the summer, 2005, and again included all in-coming freshmen, although this time a separate baseline survey was developed for transfer students as well. The baseline for the 2005 survey of freshmen included 1691 out of 2386 incoming students (a response rate of 71%). The baseline for the 2005 survey of transfers included 875 out of 1029 entering transfer students (a response rate of 85%).

The end-of-fall-quarter, 2005, "transitions" survey for the freshmen cohort included 1371 students out of 2375 (a response rate of 58%). The end-of-fall-quarter, 2005, "transitions" survey for transfer students included 499 out of 1029 students (a response rate of 48%).

¹Current definitions of the term "freshmen" include nowadays a small percentage of students who do not fit the traditional profile of a freshman. These include high school students who have earned Running Start and Advanced Placement (AP) credits. Technically, these students are entering college for the first-time, but may have earned as many as 90 college credits.

The one-year follow-up of freshmen entering Western in fall, 2005, was conducted in spring, 2006, and included 1061 out of 2261 still enrolled freshmen (a response rate of 47%). The one-year follow-up of transfers entering Western in fall, 2005, was also conducted in spring, 2006, and included 497 out of 992 still enrolled transfers (a response rate of 50%).

CURRENT SURVEY

This report presents findings from the end-of-fall-quarter, 2005, “transitions” survey for freshmen. There were 1371 completed surveys out of the 2375 students who were still registered at the end of their first quarter (a response rate of 57.7%). Out of this total, 949 took the survey online and another 422 completed it over the telephone. Questions were designed to help better understand the nature of their first quarter experience with respect to their personal, social and academic adjustment; the kinds of personal, financial, and academic pressures and difficulties they experienced; their use of student services (including advising) and newly implemented student services programs (e.g., an enhanced “Western Reads” program); and their overall satisfaction with Western after one quarter. Most of these same questions were also asked of the fall, 2005, incoming transfer students, thus facilitating comparisons between these two groups, keeping in mind, of course, that the transfers had junior standing during this first quarter.

To find out more about previous surveys of the 2003 freshmen WELS cohort, see the following reports:

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (Report No. 2003-02).

Western Educational Longitudinal Study: Fall 2003 Freshmen Transition Survey. Focus: A Research Summary, 8, (4), 1-8.

Western Educational Longitudinal Study: Spring, 2004, Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003 (Report No. 2004-01).

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Spring, 2005, Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003 (Report No. 2006-01).

To find out more about previous surveys of the 2005 freshmen and transfer WELS cohorts see the following reports:

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Fall, 2005, Baseline Survey of In-coming Transfers (Report No. 2006-02).

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Fall, 2005, Baseline Survey of In-coming Freshmen (Report No. 2006-03).

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Freshmen in Transition: Fall Quarter, 2005, In-coming Freshmen Surveyed at the End of Fall Quarter, 2005 (Report 2006-04).

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Transfers in Transition: Fall Quarter, 2005, In-coming Transfers Surveyed at the End of Fall Quarter, 2005 (Report 2006-05).

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Spring, 2006, Follow-up Survey of Students Who Had Entered as Freshmen in the Fall, 2005 (Report 2008-02)

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Spring, 2006, Follow-up Survey of Students Who Had Entered as Transfers in the Fall, 2005 (Report 2008-03)

WELS Transition Survey of Fall, 2005, In-coming
Freshmen during the Late Fall Quarter, 2005, and
Early Winter Quarter, 2006

FINDINGS

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly agree
Below is a list of statements about the student culture at Western. Please read each statement and tell us to what extent you agree or disagree that each is true based on impressions you have formed thus far. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that " <i>Western is a place where...</i> "									
students are regularly engaged in intellectual/academic discussions outside the classroom. (N=1376)	1.3	6.3	12.4	17.3	38.1	19.4	5.2		
students are focused on social relationships more than academics. (n=1374)	0.9	6.3	17.8	35.0	26.6	11.2	2.2		
students are actively engaged in political and environmental causes. (n = 886)	0.9	5.9	14.2	22.8	34.1	16.8	5.3		
there is a lot of drinking and pot smoking (or other drug use). (n = 1369)	2.0	6.7	14.6	21.9	29.2	16.7	8.8		
life in the residence halls is clearly separate from life in the classroom.	2.0	6.1	15.8	24.5	23.9	18.0	9.7		
there are many opportunities for social activities so it is difficult to study. (n = 1367)	4.4	14.6	26.0	23.9	19.8	7.8	3.5		
religion and religious activity play a central role in students' lives. (n = 888)	7.0	18.4	20.2	32.1	15.0	5.1	2.4		
many students have friendships with others of different race/ ethnicity. (n = 886)	2.0	4.0	4.3	11.6	26.3	29.8	22.0		
Students accept others with different lifestyles, ability levels and values. (n = 1371)	1.7	2.9	3.6	5.8	20.4	37.3	28.2		

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

Please rate your transition to Western in terms of the following...	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Getting access to the courses you need (n = 1376)	2.4	11.0	33.5	41.4	11.7
Developing good relationships with professors (n = 1374)	1.5	11.4	41.4	37.8	7.9
Getting information about required courses, prerequisites, etc. (n = 893)	1.9	9.5	32.3	46.0	10.3
Getting the advising you needed (n = 1373)	2.5	12.7	34.2	40.6	9.8
Getting well-situated in your new residence (n = 1353)	1.3	3.3	15.6	50.3	29.4
Feeling like you fit in with others (n = 890)	3.5	7.9	21.8	46.1	20.8
Your transition, overall (n = 890)	0.9	3.3	21.3	56.5	18.0
Please rate how well you think your previous school prepared you for coursework at Western. (n = 893)	Not at all well	A little	Somewhat well	Very well	Extremely well
	3.5	11.9	28.4	38.4	17.8

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

How difficult has each of the following been for you personally this fall?	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely			
Having enough money and dealing with financial matters and concerns. (n = 1376)	24.4	30.5	32.7	8.4	4.0			
Getting the emotional support you need to do well in school. (n = 1369)	49.1	26.7	18.6	4.8	0.7			
Managing stress and other sources of emotional upset. (n = 1374)	28.5	35.7	25.1	9.2	1.5			
Getting enough sleep. (n = 1370)	20.4	28.6	28.5	17.1	5.4			
Handling the use of alcohol and drugs. (n = 1372)	72.7	16.3	8.6	1.8	0.6			
Fitting in with others and making friends at Western. (n = 1372)	47.8	28.5	16.2	6.3	1.2			
Meeting family expectations for, or interference with, your academic work. (n = 1367)	51.2	25.2	16.5	5.7	1.4			
Finding people you get along with, making friends. (n = 1374)	51.9	26.2	14.8	6.0	1.1			
Maintaining, forming or ending romantic relationships. (n = 1348)	41.9	21.6	19.3	11.6	5.6			
During fall quarter, how many days during a typical week would you say you...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Almost daily
got less than 8 hours of sleep? (n = 895)	4.6	10.5	14.6	16.1	16.1	14.9	3.6	19.7
got at least 30 minutes of planned exercise? (n = 890)	17.8	12.7	18.4	19.0	12.0	6.6	2.8	10.7
skipped lunch or dinner? (n = 892)	26.7	20.6	13.1	13.7	8.5	6.3	2.4	8.7
drank too much alcohol or used drugs recreationally? (n = 72.1)	72.1	15.2	5.9	3.2	1.5	0.2	0.7	1.1

Have you worked at a job on a regular basis for pay or work study this quarter? (n = 1361)	Yes: regular job	Yes: work study	No		
	15.9	5.5	78.5		
How many hours a week have you typically worked this quarter? (n = 1376)	No hours	Less than 10 hours	10-19 hours	20-29 hours	30 or more hours
	78.7	7.7	9.6	3.3	0.7

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

How difficult has each of the following been for you this Fall?	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
Managing your coursework (n = 1375)	15.9	41.6	33.7	7.9	0.9
Performing well in large lecture classes (n = 1353)	37.4	30.8	23.1	7.2	1.6
Preparing for and presenting your work in front of a class (n = 878)	43.5	28.7	20.4	5.8	1.6
Sharing with other students in a discussion group (n = 886)	43.0	32.3	19.2	4.5	1.0
Attending classes regularly (n = 1373)	57.8	22.5	12.9	5.2	1.6
Completing reading and coursework on time (n = 1373)	31.5	34.2	24.2	8.3	1.7
Performing well on multiple choice exams (n = 1359)	36.2	30.4	22.1	8.6	2.6
Writing long, in-depth papers (n = 1324)	26.7	28.2	28.9	11.5	4.8
Meeting the expectations and obligations of your parents or other family members (n = 1371)	50.5	26.0	16.4	5.0	2.0
Meeting the expectations and obligations of your friends or peer group (n = 1328)	65.0	22.1	10.9	1.7	0.2
Meeting the expectations and obligations of your boyfriend/ girlfriend or other romantic relationships (n = 1328)	69.1	15.1	9.8	3.9	2.1
Balancing the time and other demands of family, friends, school, and/or your workplace (n = 1371)	23.3	33.7	29.1	10.9	3.0
Have you been receiving the <i>This week@wvu</i> weekly emails from New Student Services / Family Outreach (sent every Monday starting in late September)? (n = 1374)	Yes	No			
	91.8	8.2			

	Never	Once or twice	A few times	Almost always	Always
How often have you read these emails in detail each time you received them? (n = 1259)	11.8	33.4	26.8	22.2	5.9
How often have you attended events or activities because you found out about them through these weekly emails? (n = 1251)	42.9	41.1	15.6	0.2	0.2

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

How valuable did you find each of the following programs or events to be in helping you made a good transition to Western, either socially, academically, or both?	Did not attend or participate	Not at all valuable	A little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
Transitions Make-up for transfers (Sept 12) (n = 1372)	97.4	1.1	0.6	0.9	0.1	0.0
Fall orientation for freshmen (Sept 19) (n = 1368)	21.4	30.6	12.0	18.6	14.0	3.4
Freshmen advising connection (Nov 8) (n = 1369)	52.4	18.0	10.1	11.5	6.5	1.5
Advising in the residence halls program - open and general sessions (Oct 31-Nov 21) (n = 1373)	77.1	9.1	6.2	5.1	2.0	0.6
Opening Convocation, first week of classes (n = 1373)	41.7	26.5	13.4	9.5	6.3	2.6
LateNight@WWU at the Wade King Student Recreation Center (Mon Sept 19) (n = 1373)	63.8	20.0	6.4	5.2	3.0	1.6
LateNight@WWU at the Viking Union (Fri Sept 23) (n = 1375)	67.7	17.7	5.4	4.4	3.1	1.7
High Street Music Festival (Sat, Sept 24) (n = 1373)	71.6	13.4	3.9	3.6	4.4	3.1
Night Out with the Vikings (Fri, Sept 30) (n = 1371)	90.3	4.7	2.3	1.5	0.9	0.4
Ethnic Student Center (ESC) Kick-off at the PAC (Sat, Sept 24) (n = 1369)	95.9	2.1	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.3
Ethnic Student Center (ESC) Retreat at Camp Casey (Oct 21-22) (n = 1372)	97.2	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.0
College of Science & Technology Scholars program (meets three times throughout quarter) (n = 1370)	97.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.3
Distinguished Lecture Series--Jonathon Kozol (Sept 29) (n = 1373)	94.8	1.7	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.0
Distinguished Lecture Series--John Paul Jones (Oct 7) (n = 1368)	97.2	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5
Distinguished Lecture Series--Rita Dove (Oct 27) (n = 1373)	95.9	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.9	0.9

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

How valuable did you find each of the following programs or events to be in helping you make a good transition to Western, either socially, academically, or both? (cont.)	Did not attend or participate	Not at all valuable	A little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
Project FreshStart (alcohol assessment) Sept 20-Oct 2 (n = 1370)	92.6	8.5	4.9	3.1	0.4	0.6
MSLQ (Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire) in FIGS seminar (n = 1371)	92.0	3.6	2.0	2.0	0.1	0.3
MSLQ (Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire) in residence hall (n = 1371)	93.3	3.0	1.8	1.5	0.3	0.1
Battle in Seattle (Sat Oct 8) (n = 1374)	73.0	12.5	3.0	4.9	4.4	2.3
A Chance for Change Service Learning Fair (Tue, Oct 18) (n = 1369)	94.6	1.8	1.2	1.0	1.0	0.4
Make a Difference Day - Day of Service (Sat, Oct 22) (n = 1372)	91.0	3.6	0.8	1.2	1.8	1.6
FIGS (First year interest groups) (n = 1373)	88.6	5.6	2.0	1.6	1.4	0.8
Western's Really Big Weekend (Nov 4-6) (n= 1375)	66.3	18.0	6.0	6.0	2.0	1.6
Western Acts (Sept 19-20) (n = 1367)	88.3	5.1	2.3	1.9	1.5	1.0
Turning Point Lecture with Dawn Prince Hughes (Nov 16) (n = 1374)	97.6	0.4	0.4	0.9	0.3	0.4

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

Did you attend one of the Western Reads discussion sessions on The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night that took place at the beginning of the quarter (Sept 19 or 20)? (n = 1380)	Yes	No				
	15.7	84.3				
If YES. How valuable did you find the experience? (n = 212)	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	
	14.6	26.9	43.0	12.7	2.8	
Did you attend one of the two faculty panel discussions on The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night that took place during Fall Quarter (Oct 20 or Nov 8)? (n = 1329)	Yes	No				
	4.2	95.8				
If YES. How valuable did you find the experience? (n = 56)	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	
	8.9	25.0	37.5	19.6	7.1	
If you did not attend any one of the three Western Reads sessions listed above (in Questions 10 and 11), how important were each of the following in your decision to not attend?	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very	Extremely	
	66.7	5.6	8.1	6.0	9.3	
Didn't read the book. (n = 1158)	56.4	13.8	13.0	7.6	4.3	
Didn't hear about the discussions. (n = 1158)	33.3	12.2	21.7	17.0	11.1	
Conflicted with other activities I wanted to attend. (n = 1158)	45.2	13.5	15.5	13.1	8.0	
Already read and talked about the book with other students and saw no reason to attend. (n = 1158)	41.4	16.1	18.7	12.9	6.5	
Didn't know anyone else who would be attending. (n = 1158)	28.2	15.1	19.9	19.0	13.4	
It didn't sound like something I would be interested in. (n = 1158)	47.2	15.1	15.8	10.9	5.8	
It sounded too much like remedial work. (n = 1158)						

WELS Transitions Survey Fall 2005 - Online Survey of Freshmen - Late Fall Quarter, 2005

During Fall quarter, did you use any of the following resources and, if so, how satisfied were you with your experience. (e.g., Did you get the information you needed? Was the staff courteous?)	Did Not Use	Used, Not at All Satisfied	Used, Somewhat Satisfied	Used, Very Satisfied	Used, Extremely Satisfied
Academic Advising Center (n = 1377)	65.2	2.3	16.3	12.2	3.9
Tutorial and Academic Skills Center (n = 1375)	74.0	1.6	8.9	11.8	3.7
Student Outreach Services (n = 1377)	93.8	0.4	2.3	2.7	0.9
DisAbility Services (n = 1377)	96.0	0.3	0.8	1.7	1.2
Registrar's Office (n = 1374)	66.6	2.4	11.6	15.2	4.2
New Student Services (n = 1373)	91.9	0.1	4.1	3.1	0.9
Financial Aid Office (n = 1379)	65.9	2.0	12.3	14.9	5.0
Career Services Center (n = 1371)	91.2	0.9	3.8	2.9	1.1
So far, how satisfied are you with Western? (n = 1371)	Can't Say	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Very Extremely
	0.9	1.5	5.0	20.4	55.1 17.1